

Date: March 17, 2017  
To: USS Board members  
From: Bruce Burton, President  
Subject: March 2017 President's Report



Dear USS Board members,

Many things have been accomplished this month and we are working the plan diligently. There are few things that are important for you to know this month-please see below.

### **Over the transom**

#### **Austin National Conference**

We had good Board attendance at our National Conference and National Sailing Programs Symposium (NSPS) in Austin last month. I felt that attendance of our committee chairs and members of the committees could have been a lot better. It was disappointing and continues the trend of declining attendance.

We need to work on building attendance and face to face (FTF) collaboration. Many people cited the timing during the week (Tuesday and Wednesday), timing during the month (Valentine's Day on the weekend of NSPS), expense and digital communication replacing FTF meetings as being the most significant contributors to the decline in attendance.

I have recommended to Martine and Katie O that we form an informal committee with RSA representatives to work on conference attendance-ensuring that we make the conferences as relative and valuable as possible to our members, publicize the events and agendas early and promote the conference when we communicate with our committee chairs and members. In short, we need to provide attractive reasons for people to attend and we must pick the best dates and places for our conferences.

We had Board meetings and briefings on the new 5-ring Olympic Structure. More on that in the OSC Report.

Other key things that we talked about and did:

1. LSAs: We need better connections with our Local Sailing Organizations (LSAs).
2. Fall Board Meeting: We will have a ribbon cutting for our new offices in September or October and will have our FTF Board meeting at that time. This is a very important meeting for everyone to attend and we will provide as much advance notice of the date as possible. Note-the date is partially dependent on the construction schedule, so please understand that we are unable to publish the date now.
3. Membership Growth: Difficult in this period of the quadrennial. Jack indicates that we should budget 3% growth for 2017.
4. Ethanol: Ethanol additives are destroying marine engines that are not prepared for blended fuels. USS can help warn our members about this. Using fuel with ethanol has a high probability of damaging outboard and inboard engines, so do not use gasoline purchased from your local gas station if it contains ethanol.
5. Judges meetings: The judges are holding separate meetings not during our national conference. We need to bring them into the National Conference schedule.
6. Crew Training: I noted that we do not have a crew training program.
7. Strategic Planning: A number of Board members indicated that we need to undertake the development of a strategic plan. We will be doing that in Atlanta on April 24 and 25. Martine is publishing the details of those meetings now.



8. Volunteer Corps: We should really work on developing our volunteer corps. I had the sense that the Board feels that we are losing touch with our volunteer base and we need to invigorate those relationships. This could be considered a Human Resource function and especially applicable to Race Administration, where we have a shortage of personnel.
9. Board Governance: I was asked to join a panel that discussed Board Governance in non-profits. These were my talking points:
  - a. The President/Chairman sets the tone for the Board. Are we and actively or passively governed institution?
  - b. It is the Board who runs the organization, not the chair. The chair keeps the Board focused and moving in the direction that the Board wants the organization to head. The quality of the organization is highly dependent on the quality of the Board and their willingness to engage in the mission of the organization. No commitment=no results.
  - c. A great nominating committee recruits great board members. Have a great nominating committee-we fortunately do.
  - d. Focus on strategy first. Let's make sure that we are on the right tack with the right sails and are hiking hard up before we worry about the distracting dirty deck.
  - e. Ask the audience: The most powerful tool is to ask the membership and the Board questions what is important. They know more about what is going on that you do, so ask for their input. On the whole, when added together, they are rarely wrong.

The National Conference was productive for me and I made progress on the three goals I outlined for you last month: making connections, understanding your concerns and working on improving the NC for 2018.

#### Past President's Luncheon

We had an enjoyable, small, Past President's luncheon at the Austin Club on the first day of NSPS. Tom Hubbell, Gary Jobson, Jim Muldoon and I had enjoyable luncheon in a private room where I solicited and received their advice. We covered the gamut of subjects from membership and governance to Olympics and youth sailing. It was disappointing that more could not attend, though coming all the way to Austin for lunch is a big ticket to ask for. So, I will look at moving the luncheon to the Saturday, which may make it easier for them to attend.

#### NSPS

We had 300+ at the National Sailing Programs Symposium and the conference went very well. The awards party was excellent and the attendees are just about the most enthusiastic members that we have. The only thing that I advocate at this time is keep heading in this direction we are. They have a great thing going and we need to help other areas much more than NSPS.

#### World Sailing

As previously reported, Jack and I are disputing the Rule Book Digital Rights claims of World Sailing. USS asserts that USS should not pay royalties to WS for digital rulebook sales, based upon our interpretation of their policies and the way in which they were developed. We are in a stalemate position and if we continue down this path it may require that USS defends itself in court. World Sailing is intransigent in its position, which surprises me since their newly elected president, Kim Andersen, ran on a platform of working well with the MNAs. So much for fulfilling campaign promises.

Gary Jobson is aware of our position and has indicated to us that he is first a member of the WS board and he must be impartial in his position on this. We understand and accept that. Gary will always do what is right and fair.

I have instructed Jack to work with Andy Hunt (CEO of WS) to gain an interim solution while we seek a political solution at the next World Conference in November. Please see attached the letter that I sent to Kim earlier this week.

### **CEO Contract**

Based upon the Board approval in February, we updated Jack Gierhart's contract and changed his title.

### **Over the Bow**

My immediate concerns are:

1. National Conference Attendance-start working that plan in the next month or so, after we complete the April FTF Board meeting.
2. April Board Call: We will have an April Board call on April 17<sup>th</sup> to dispense with our standard meeting agenda so as to not dilute our strategic planning time in Atlanta. Please be on the call.
3. Having a productive FTF April Board meeting on the subject of strategic planning. I am pleased to announce that Tarasa Davis will be our facilitator for the sessions. Please plan on arriving at the hotel nearby the airport by 4:30p.m. (I will be there earlier) on the 24<sup>th</sup> and plan on having a flight later than 7p.m. on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Please come prepared and charged up for good planning.
4. We need to start working on By-Law changes to reflect changes in titles (Jack and Malcolm) and other administrative changes. This is important to do because we are an NGB. I will appoint a qualified volunteer to start leading this.
5. My biggest concern that weighs on me is Olympic program funding and the lack thereof. I will be spending a lot of time initiating plans to address this with Jack, Brian Keane and Malcolm after Jim Campbell joins us on April 1.

Thank you for your continued support,



Bruce J. Burton,  
President

Attached: letters to and from Kim Andersen, President, World Sailing